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# Slow, Unsteady

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Adria Curts  
Slow, Unsteady

“I guess we’ll have to take it how we get it,” she breathed in and out. I wondered if she was dying. In a Mt. Gilead pharmacy, it’s hard to tell. Iodine, Pledge country scent, or nursing home formaldehyde, it reminded me of cat dissection in Mrs. Steven’s class. She tried to straighten out each dollar bill, slow and unsuccessful. I had been speaking about the weather. Hot, humid days were behind and now glared in front like the old ladies with white umbrellas and Vick’s lemon drops who never left Grandma B’s front porch.

“I guess we’ll have to take it how we get it,” she breathed in and out as if I didn’t hear her the first time. I think there was a scar on her elbow, either from defending or being defenseless. Heat and trailer park men mixed with cheap beer, like the dog pound behind the county fair. The days at work were dragging for me, and days at all were dragging for her. She breathed in and out, slow, unsteady. I breathed in and out, healthy, steady. Cross-country races with Flex-All scent and Gatorade, I was a Mr. Good-body TV special.

I stared at the lines around her eyes, the scar on her elbow. Maybe she was confused and fell at 2:00 a.m. when she walked alone to answer the front door. Her cat probably licked the scar when she drank orange mint tea or Alka-Seltzer. I looked away from the woman...mother, laborer, lover, un-loved, human. I might know what it feels like to breathe in and out, slow, unsteady.